

February 19, 2009

Housing Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Re: Next Steps Supportive Housing Initiative

To Members of the Committee:

Governor Rell's proposed budget calls for eliminating capital financing for the creation of new supportive housing through the Next Steps Supportive Housing Initiative. **I urge your support for HB5071, "An Act Concerning the Supportive Housing Initiative"** to provide this essential funding.

I understand the severe pressures on the State budget, but the State call ill afford to ignore the needs of people with serious mental illness for affordable housing and support. Their needs will not disappear if they are not appropriately addressed. Instead, their needs will be addressed through much more costly systems – hospital emergency rooms, inpatient psychiatric care, jails, homeless shelters and prisons – that will yield only short term benefits.

I have worked in the field of supportive housing for over sixteen years. I have seen how supportive housing has given men and women with mental illness a chance to regain their lives and health after months or even years of homelessness. I also know that supportive housing cannot be created unless adequate funding is available from the public sector for capital, supportive services and operating subsidies.

Right now there are communities across the state with "shovel ready" supportive housing developments that can move forward once this funding is preserved by you. We all stand to gain by enabling these projects to proceed: reduced crisis care for vulnerable people with mental illness; construction jobs, property tax revenues, and economic benefits to local communities from project development; and an end to homelessness for scores of our citizens. It is a small investment that yields substantial results.

Sincerely,

Janice Elliott

Janice L. Elliott
President